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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

NEA FOR BURNS/SATTERFIELD/DIBBLE;  
NEA/SA/EX FOR RICHIE; DEPT FOR DS/IP/ITA; DEPT FOR  
DS/IP/NEA;  
NSC FOR ABRAMS/DANIN; USAID FOR DCHA, DCHA/FPP, PRM FOR  
DEWEY/GREENE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: WB/G SITREP: MARCH 1, 2005 (1300 HOURS LOCAL) --  
WEST BANK CLASHES INJURE SIX; GAZA QUIET OVERNIGHT

This is a joint ConGen Jerusalem/Embassy Tel Aviv cable.

11. (SBU) Summary: Palestinian landowners and Israeli and Palestinian demonstrators clashed with Israeli Border Police during a protest against the construction of the separation barrier near the village of Bayt Surik, west of Jerusalem. One Border Police officer was injured. In Jerusalem, at least three Palestinian youths sustained light injuries in clashes with Israeli Border policemen on February 28 in the Shu,fat refugee camp following an incident in which border policeman reportedly harassed with Palestinian girls passing through the checkpoint at the entrance to the camp. Israeli Police on March 1 detained Shaykh Taysir Tammimi, the chief justice of the Palestinian religious court, after he reportedly attempted to enter Jerusalem without a permit. As of 1600 hours, Palestinian lawyers were attempting to secure the release of Shaykh Tammimi from Israeli custody at the Russian Compound. The IDF on February 28 discovered a vehicle packed with, according to press reports, some 300 kilograms of explosives in the West Bank village of Arraba southwest of Jenin. Israeli sappers defused the bomb. An Israeli security official stated that PA security forces cooperated with the IDF in tracking the vehicle. The Gaza Strip was largely quiet overnight February 28-March 1. End Summary.

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West Bank  
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12. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths: Nil.

-- Attack/Injury: Palestinian gunmen on February 28 wounded two Israeli security guards near the Israeli settlement of Kiryat Sefer, west of Ramallah. There were no claims of responsibility.

-- Injury: An Israeli Border policeman sustained light injuries from rocks thrown by demonstrators during a February 28 protest against the building of the separation barrier near Bayt Surik (See &Demonstrations/Clashes8).

--Injuries: At least three Palestinian youths on February 28 sustained light injuries during clashes with Israeli Border police at the checkpoint into the Shu,fat refugee camp (See &Clashes8).

-- Injury: Palestinians on March 1 clashed with the IDF in Yatta village south of Hebron. According to witnesses, IDF soldiers reportedly beat a Palestinian that had thrown stones at the soldiers.

13. (SBU) ARRESTS/SECURITY:

-- Arrest: Israeli Police March 1 detained Shaykh Taysir Tammimi, the chief justice of the Palestinian religious court, after he reportedly attempted to enter Jerusalem without a permit. As of 1600 hours, Palestinian lawyers were attempting to secure the release of Shaykh Tammimi from Israeli custody at the Russian Compound.

-- Arrests: The IDF overnight February 28 ) March 1 arrested a total of seven Palestinians in the Tulkarm area. In addition, the IDF arrested four Fatah activists from the village of Azoun near Qalqiliya.

-- Closure: The IDF tightened its closure around Tulkarm in the wake of the February 25 suicide bombing in Tel Aviv.

-- Incursion: The IDF on March 1 entered Tamoun village near Jenin to conduct house-to-house searches. As of 1600 hours, there have been no reported arrests.

-- Security Development: The IDF on February 28 discovered a vehicle packed with, according to press reports, some 300

kilograms of explosives in the West Bank village of Arraba southwest of Jenin. Israeli sappers defused the bomb. An Israeli security official stated that PA security forces cooperated with the IDF in tracking the vehicle.

-- Shooting Incident: Palestinian gunmen on February 28 fired gunshots and a grenade at an IDF vehicle traveling in the old city of Nablus. There were no injuries reported from this incident. An IDF search of the area resulted in no arrests.

-- Demonstrations/Clashes: Palestinian landowners and Israeli and Palestinian demonstrators clashed with Israeli Border Police February 28 during a protest against the construction of the separation barrier near the village of Bayt Surik west of Jerusalem.

-- Clashes: Palestinians clashed with Israeli Border policemen on February 28 in the Shu'fat refugee camp in Jerusalem following an incident in which border policeman reportedly harassed with Palestinian girls passing through the checkpoint at the entrance to the camp.

-- Deportation: The IDF on February 28 deported Ibrahim Abu Aisha, originally from the Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem, to the Gaza Strip after he had served 14 months of administrative detention. The Israeli authorities accuse Abu Aisha of being a Hamas operative.

#### 14. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- Israeli radio quoted a senior Israeli security official on March 1 stating that Israeli-Palestinian security talks would resume next week following the return of PA President Abbas from the London conference.

-- PA Minister of Youth and Sports Ahmad Sakher Bseiso told Voice of Palestine radio on March 1 that he had contacted all Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad, who had reaffirmed their commitment to the cease-fire. Bseiso added that the Palestinian factions have distanced themselves from the February 25 suicide bombing in Tel Aviv.

-- Palestinian media sources reported March 1 that the IDF had handed over land confiscation orders in Jaba, village near Ramallah.

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Gaza  
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#### 15. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths: Nil.

-- Injuries: Nil.

-- Mortars/Rockets: Nil.

-- Shootings: The IDF reported that Palestinian militants launched one shooting attack February 28 at an IDF mobile patrol northwest of Khan Yunis. No injuries were reported.

-- Explosions: The IDF reported that an explosive device was found and safely deactivated February 28 one kilometer northeast of Netzer Hazani, in the Gush Katif settlement bloc. Israeli media reported that the device weighed some 40 kilograms and was attached to the settlement perimeter fence.

-- Explosions: UNRWA reported that the IDF set and detonated explosive devices February 28 near Sufa Crossing, in what was reportedly a search for tunnels in the area.

#### 16. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS:

-- Route Four (Salahadeen Road), the main north-south traffic artery, was open March 1, with a major detour at Netzarim Junction. Abu Khouli is open only for public transportation; no private vehicles are allowed to cross.

-- Erez Crossing was open for internationals and for a limited number of Palestinians February 28, and 983 laborers and 125 merchants crossed into Israel.

-- The Erez Industrial Zone was open February 28 and 501 laborers entered the zone.

-- Sufa Crossing was closed for Palestinian laborers March 1, but was open for the import of aggregates used in construction.

-- Karni Terminal was open for limited imports and exports March 1.

-- Rafah Terminal was open for arrivals and departures March

1.  
-- Tel al-Sultan checkpoint was closed March 1. Toufah

checkpoint was open for residents of al-Mowassi, except for males between the ages of 16 to 35.

17. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- UNRWA reported that residents of the Jabaliya refugee camp demonstrated March 1 in Jabaliya, demanding that UNRWA rebuild their homes demolished in the September-October 2004 IDF operations in the area. Demonstrators claim that UNRWA is unfairly focusing its reconstruction efforts on the southern areas.

-- Palestinian sources and UNRWA reported that al-Azhar University in Gaza City was closed for three days beginning February 28 pending resolution of a dispute between students and the newly-appointed head of the university, Dr. Hani Nijem. The dispute reportedly centers around administrative issues, including tuition, fees, and diploma qualifications.

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